DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 429 CS 011 871

AUTHOR Hornstein, Steve
TITLE Echoes from the Past: Actions for the Future.
PUB DATE 6 Aug 92
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Whole Language Umbrella Conference (3rd, Niagara Falls, NY, August 6, 1992).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; Educational History; *Educational Trends; Elementary Education; *Open Education; *Progressive Education; *Student Centered Curriculum; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS Educational Issues; Historical Background

ABSTRACT

Progressive education, open education, and whole language can be seen as part of a larger "progressive tradition" in American education. All three of these educational movements are "child centered," challenge the rigidity of traditional school organizations, view the nature of knowledge and the purpose of schools differently from the view upon which most schools are based, carry a liberal political ideology, and are not monolithic. Neither the early progressives nor the proponents of open education were sufficiently aware of earlier reform efforts to have learned from them. Progressive education became solely the domain of professional educators. The literature of both the progressives and the open educators often focused only on technique, thereby diluting and losing the larger agenda. The movements became "bandwagons." Both Progressive Education and Open Education movements took on a political tone that the larger community did not support. Individual whole language teachers can take steps to avoid these pitfalls: (1) become self-consciously political in their interactions with parents, the larger community, with politicians, with those who would attack whole language on political grounds, and among themselves; (2) avoid adopting a new technique or activity until they are certain it is consistent with their beliefs; (3) protect those having whole language practices forced on them with the same fervor with which they support whole language; and (4) become more aware of the child centered movements which preceded whole language, and more aware of what is happening in schools. (Contains 14 references.) (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 376 429

Echoes from the Past: Actions for the Future

Steve Hornstein

St. Cloud State University

Paper Presented at the 3rd Annual Whole Language Umbrella Conference

Niagara Falls, NY August 6, 1992

I'd like to begin this presentation with a number of cautions and instructions so as to make the presentation more "user friendly." First, as you may have noticed, I am reading this paper. I'm doing this as an experiment, as I have usually just presented my work in a more informal style. So you folks are the guinea pigs for this experiment and we'll examine your condition when the experiment is over.

This is also the first time I've presented work which is primarily based in research rather than in my on-going work with students and teachers. Submitting the proposal for this session was a lot like agreeing to publicly navigate a well known local precipice in a barrel. The decision to do it was somewhat impulsive and the actual event carries with it excitement, risk, danger and perhaps reward. I see the text of the paper as the metaphoric barrel in this scenario, my only protection from the rocks and currents below. Unfortunately, upon my arrival here in Niagara Falls I was informed by an over zealous tour guide how little protection the barrel actually affords and how few of the jumpers have actually come through the ordeal alive. I guess that either means I'm in big trouble or that it's time for a new metaphor.

Seriously, I hope the actual text will allow me to discuss this subject with you with the greatest focus and clarity and economy of time so as to leave room for discussion. Still, I'll encourage you to interrupt or ask questions at any time if something is not clear, or like those on the shore at one of the barrel jumps, to help me

CS011871

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Hornstein

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

steer away from dangerous rocks and currents as necessary, to jeer or to enjoy the presentation for its admittedly limited entertainment value..

Second, this presentation is entitled **Echoes from the Past, Actions for the Future,** and my intention is to relate the history of both the progressive education movement and the open education movement to where we are going as a Whole Language movement. I am not an historian and much of my information here comes from secondary rather than primary sources, I see myself as an interpreter and synthesizer of this information rather than its creator. Thus I prefer Patrick Shannon's (1991) notion of "story" as opposed to "history" for this presentation, as it clearly leaves room for there to be other stories from other perspectives.

Finally, my own perspective on this work has changed a great deal has I have pursued these ideas. I see this as a work in progress so I will again ask your help in continuing to stretch these ideas.

When I began this work, it was my intention to present the Whole Language movement and our current experiences in the context of what we could be learned from the two other major child centered movements of this century, progressive education and open education. Although I find Santayana's bromide a bit over simplistic, you know the one, "those unfamiliar with their history are doomed to repeat it." I do believe we can learn from the experiences of others attempting to reach the same or similar goals. I saw these two previous movements as "failed" movements or false starts, we would do well to avoid **their** mistakes.

There are at least five clear similarities between Whole Language and these two earlier movements.

1) All three of these movements are "child centered." That means that children's wishes, interests, abilities, developmental levels, and preferred approach to learning, are taken into account and children have some degree of voice in the planning and direction of the curriculum.

2) All three approaches challenge the rigidity of traditional school organizations.

3) All three of the movements view the nature of knowledge and the purpose of schools differently from the view upon which most schools are based. Because not everyone will share the same activities or experiences, knowledge and meaning are personal, personally created, and changeable. The purposes of Progressive, Open and Whole Language schools are more about helping kids to create their own understandings of the world than they are about transmitting a set body of knowledge and skills.

4) Given their view of knowledge and schooling, all three reform movements carry with them a liberal political ideology.

5) Finally, none of these movements can be considered "monolithic." In all three case there are subgroups and factions headed in a variety of other, if related directions. There were social reconstructionist, child centered and rural education focused groups within the progressive movement, open schools, free schools and IGE schools in the 60's and 70's, and of course those who see Whole Language as a Reading and Language Arts approach, those who see it as an approach to the entire curriculum and those who see it as liberation pedagogy.

As I noted previously, when I started this work I perceived progressive education and open education as failed movements. I now believe it is more accurate to see Progressive Education, Open Education and Whole Language as parts of a larger "progressive tradition" in American education. The roots of this tradition extend well into the nineteenth century in this country, and into the 18th century if we consider European philosophers as well. Whole Language educators are only the most recent inheritors and standard bearers for this tradition. Rather than looking at **their** earlier failures, we must be cognizant of **our** earlier accomplishments, and the legacies of

the earlier proponents of this tradition in order to see ourselves and our actions in a larger context.

"Progressive Education" (the term usually used to describe the movement embodying the progressive tradition in the late 19th through the middle of the 20th century) achieved no less than what Lawrence Cremin has called the "transformation of the school" (which is in fact the title of his book about progressive education). Both open education and Whole Language seek to do away with the rigidity of current school practice. Still, the rigidity we see today is nothing compared with the rigidity of the late 19th century.

In 1892 a magazine called "The Forum" published a series of articles by Joseph Mayer Rice which sought to characterize education in a number of major American cities. The articles caused quite a furor among educators and lay people alike as it was openly critical, even muck raking, in it's criticisms of many American school systems. Here's how Rice (1893/1969) described a recitation in a New York school.

> *Sense training is a special feature of the school, and at least half a dozen different methods... are used for the purpose. The first of these methods is one by means of which form and color are studied in combination. I witnessed such a combination in the lowest primary grade. Before the lesson began there was passed to each child a little flag, on which had been pasted various forms and colors , such as a square piece of green paper, a triangular piece of red paper etc. when each child had been supplied, a signal was given by the teacher. Upon receiving the signal, the first child sprang up, gave the name of the geometrical form upon his flag, loudly and rapidly defined the form, mentioned the name of the color, and fell back into his seat to make way for the second child, thus; " A square; a square has four equal sides and four corners; green" (down). Second Child (up): "A triangle; a triangle has three side and three corners; red" (down), Third child (up): A trapezium; a trapezium has four sides none of which are parallel, and four corners; yellow" (down). Fourth child (up): " A rhomb; a rhomb has four sides, two sharp corners and two blunt corners; blue." This process was continued until each child in the class had recited. the rate of speed maintained during the recitation was so great that seventy*

children passed through the process of defining in a very few minutes. The children are drilled in these definitions as soon as they enter the school, and the definitions are repeated from week to week and from year to year until the child has finished his primary school education.

In one of the higher classes I saw a modification of this procedure. here each child was given a wooden geometrical form, and when the starting signal was given, instead of one child bobbing up and facing the teacher, two children sprang up, geometrical forms in hand, and faced each other. Then the following conversation ensued:

The second child asked the first child: "What have you in your hand?"

First child: "I have an oblong."

Second child: "Why do you say it is an oblong?"

First child: "Because it has two long sides, two short sides and four corners."

When this answer had been rapidly screamed, a rather complicated triple motion, which was accomplished almost instantaneously ensued. At one and the same time the first child sat down, the second child wheeled around and the third rose to his feet and turned so as to face the second pupil. By the time the first pupil had fallen into his seat, the second and third pupils were facing each other, and the third child was asking the second child, " What have you in your hand?"

Second child: "I have a square."

Third child: "Why do you say it is a square?"

Second child: "Because it has four equal sides and four corners."

When this had been said the triple motion again took place, so that in the twinkling of an eye the third and fourth pupils were already staring each other in the face and beginning to talk. This process also was continued until each child in the class had recited (pp. 34-36).

Clearly, the rigidity of many of today's schools is not the rigidity of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Cremin (1961) credits Rice with being the start of the progressive movement because he was the first to identify it as a movement, and to describe the difference between what he described as "progressive" practice in education and it's stultifying if more common counterpart . (We need to distinguish the progressive movement from what Garth Boomer (1989) describes as progressivism in

education in Australia. Boomer's comments are more about current Whole Language practice.) Cremin also credits the progressives of this period beginning at the turn of the century and ending in the 1950's with the following innovations:

1) Educational opportunity was extended both upward and downward...more students went on to high school and kindergartens and nursery programs flourished.

2) Many school districts moved from an 8 year elementary and 4 year high school model to a 6, 3, 3 configuration.

3) There was massive reorganization of curriculum at all levels. The 1918 Commission on Secondary Education, the recommendations of which are the basis for most high schools to this day was heavily influenced by progressive educators and by progressive ideals.

4) "Extra-curricular activities" became the rule rather than the radical exception.

5) There was a great deal more variance and flexibility in the way students were grouped. This was most commonly done on the basis of intelligence or achievement tests, which, of course, we would now find problematic. There was also more attention paid to the needs of individual children.

6) As noted previously, the character of classrooms changed and students and teachers alike became more active and informal with one another.

7) Instructional materials changed as textbooks became more colorful and flashcards, workbooks, worksheets , and audio visual materials became more common.

8) School Architecture changed to reflect these changes. Desks were no longer bolted to the floor and a variety of special purpose rooms. Gyms, laboratories and other kinds of special purpose rooms became common in many schools.

9) Teachers were better educated...and much of their training reflected progressive education.

10) Administrative positions, separate from teaching, along with the surrounding bureaucracy became more common.

11) Individually paced programs, which are now coming back as OBE, non-graded schools and mastery learning are tied together, were also a progressive innovation (pp. 306-308).

In conclusion, to dismiss the progressives as merely a bunch of affluent private schools, apart from the educational mainstream, ignores the major effects the progressives had on our current schools. Similarly to dismiss progressive education as a failed movement of little consequence today is far off the mark. My grandmother would have said "You too should be such a successful failure."

Further it is a mistake for us to dismiss progressive education as more different than it is the same as Whole Language. Classroom practices would clearly vary across both movements. But the following excerpt (from The Transformation of the School) sounds suspiciously like whole language to me!

> *Here Mrs. Harvey's guiding principle was the familiar dictum that the everyday life of the community should furnish the main content of education. Not only did activities like gardening, cooking and animal husbandry move to the center of the program, but the standard work in the three R's was drastically revised. The youngsters wrote letters and kept notebooks in connection with their agricultural projects, they read the bulletins of the Department of Agriculture and the state experiment station along with the standard children's books in the traveling library. they used arithmetic on the problems of farm accounts* (Cremin, 1961, pp. 293-294).

Clearly, we would now want our children to have a larger field of experiences from which to draw than just those available in a rural setting. Still, the emphasis on doing real things, and reading, writing and doing math in real contexts is the kind of organization toward which Whole Language teachers strive.

The legacy of "Open Education" is less impressive. To start with, it existed for a much more limited period of time than did progressive education, 10 to 15 years, vs.

50 to 70 years depending on where you judge the starting and ending points in either case, and it occurred in a very volatile period of our recent history. Open Education had no national organization such as the Progressive Education Association or Whole Language Umbrella and had no national journal. However, during a recent trip to Britain I discovered that the ideas of a number of tasks taking place simultaneously, of student choice, of kids working together, of thematic teaching, and of learning by experience and experiment is well ingrained, even though the British would not describe what they do as "open education" or "whole language." These teachers are now fighting a conservative government determined to introduce paper and pencil tests at all levels and to engender more compartmentalized "subject teaching."

In this country the direct legacy of open education is less impressive. Aside from a number of Open Ed anachronisms like myself, who have held on to our ideals long enough to become Whole Language teachers, the main legacy seems to be learning centers and "open space" schools. Learning centers seem to have mutated in many places into "things to do when you're done with your work," or glorified worksheets, which now of course are being replaced by the more high tech glorified worksheets embodied by many computer programs.

I sometimes amuse myself by wondering who the clown was that dreamed up the behemoths we call open space schools. Let's get real here, would anybody in their right mind really want to spend the day in a huge room with two or three hundred kids engaged in 50 to 300 different tasks? That seems to have been the original idea... a giant open classroom, many teachers, many centers. The clown who first had this idea either was a masochist, a practical joker, or had never spent more than a couple of minutes with three or more children at any given time.

So we make do with these dinosaurs and do our best to exist in these spaces, and of course the kids learn to get along there too. Except in some places they continue to build new schools this way, generally because they are cheaper to build.

My undergraduates and many of the graduate students I talk to think that it is these buildings to which the terms **open education** and **open schools** refer.

So there is a clear legacy here, very powerful for the progressive era, and less so from the open ed period. But one of the key elements of the progressive tradition is clearly missing from our collective legacy. The notion of **Child Centered Education,** the notion that children should have some voice in their schooling, is not a part of this enduring legacy. Now, Child Centered Education is a scary notion for many people because it challenges the authority of parents, teachers, and curriculum developers, because it challenges the definition of truth as fixed and unchanging... and all this because we simply give children the choice of what they want to do some of the time and a voice in what and how they learn.

I think it is this idea and its sometimes inappropriate application that has motivated our critics. Progressive schools, Open school and Free schools and Whole Language schools have been accused of not teaching anything, and of course the well known cartoon from the New Yorker with the child asking "Do I have to do what I want to do again today?' comes to mind here. Because the content in progressive and open schools was not fixed for every child we have been accused of causing a drop in achievement...this in spite of the results of the famous 8 year study which demonstrated that students from progressive high schools did better in college across a wide range of variables. It happened with the "Back to Basics" movement of the 70's and 80's when open education and "permissive schools" were accused of causing a decline in SAT scores even though such schools were by no means common enough to cause such a decline and the children who had passed through these school were not yet old enough to take the SAT's... and it's happening again in Britain where "Real Reading," the practice of teaching children to read by having them read "real" books instead of basals is coming under attack by the government despite the fact that the children taught by this method are not yet old enough to have taken the high school

level tests that purport to show a drop in reading achievement. And of course, we believe that the tests don't represent what we do very well anyway. I'm now starting to hear the same old refrain about how kids from Whole Language classrooms are deficient too.

The following excerpt, from the book Mame, by Patrick Dennis (this is the book upon which the musical Auntie Mame is based) illustrates just how misunderstood progressive schools (and I think Open and Whole Language schools too) really can be.

In a previous scene Mame has discussed a laundry list of well respected (real) progressive schools in New York City. A decision has been made and Patrick is to be sent to a school run by one Ralph Devine. Here's the picture: Ralph is invited over to Mame's apartment to discuss the school and to meet Patrick. After meeting Ralph, Patrick is sent off to his room to read a book so the adults can talk. Ralph exclaims in horror, "Mame, you let that child read?! "

Here's Patrick's description of Ralph's school:

... when we got there the big room was filled with naked children of all ages racing around and screaming. Ralph came forward as naked as the day he was born and shook hands cordially.

... a square little yellow haired woman, also naked, rushed up and kissed Auntie Mame. Her name was Natalie. She and Ralph were running the school together.

..."Come in here and disrobe yes?" Natalie said, then join the others?"

I always felt a little like a picked chicken at Ralph's school, but it was pleasant and I never had to do anything. It was a big stark, whitewashed room with a heated linoleum floor, quartz glass skylights, and violet ray tubes running around the available ceiling. There were no desks or chairs, just some mats where we could lie down and sleep whenever we wanted, and in the center of the room, a big white structure that looked like a cows pelvis. We were supposed to crawl in, around and over this if we felt like it, and whenever one of the younger children did... Ralph would chuckle, "Back to the womb eh Nat!"

There was a communal toilet- "Nip the inhibitions in the bud" and all sorts of other progressive pastimes. We could draw or finger-paint or make things in Plasticine. There were Guided Conversation Circles in which we discussed our dreams and took turns telling what we were thinking at the moment. If you felt like being antisocial, you could just be antisocial. For lunch we ate raw carrots, raw cauliflower-which always gave me gas- raw apples and raw goats milk. If two children ever quarreled, Ralph would make them sit down with as many others as were interested and discuss the whole thing. I thought it was awfully silly but I got quite a thorough suntan.

But I didn't stay long enough at Ralph's school to discover whether it did me good or harm. My career there-and Ralph's too, for that matter-ended just six weeks after it began.

Ralph and Natalie, under the misapprehension that their young followers did any work at school, organized an afternoon period of Constructive Play so as to send us all home in a jolly frame of mind. The general idea was that the children, all except the really antisocial ones, were to participate in a large group game that would teach us something of Life and what awaited us beyond the portals of the school. Sometimes we'd play Farmer and attend to the scrubby avocado plants Natalie grew. At other times we'd play Laundry and wash all of Ralph's underwear, but one of the favorite games of the smaller fry was one called Fish Families, which purported to give us a certain casual knowledge of reproduction in the lower orders.

It was a simple game and rather good exercise. Natalie and all the girls would crouch on the floor and pretend to lay fish eggs and then Ralph followed by the boys, would skip among them. arms thrust sideways and fingers wiggling- "in a swimming motion, a swimming motion" - and fertilize the eggs. It always brought down the house.

On my last day at Ralph's we'd been playing Fish Families for about half an hour. Natalie and the girls were on the linoleum and Ralph started to lead the boys through the school of lady fish. " A swimming motion, a swimming motion! Now! Spread the sperm, spread the sperm! Don't forget that little mother fish there, Patrick, spread the sperm, spread the..."

There was a sudden choking noise.

"My God!" a familiar voice gasped.

We all turned around and there, fully dressed and looking like the angriest shark in the sea stood Mr. Babcock, my trustee...

The next day Ralph's school was raided by the police, and the tabloids, caught in a lull between ax murders, became profoundly pious about all progressive education. Over delicately retouched photographs of Ralph and Natalie and the student body were headlines such as ***Sex School Seized*** *with articles by civic leaders and an outraged clergy that all seemed to begin: "Mother, What Is Your Child Being Taught?* (pp. 35-38).

So progressive schooling over the years has blamed for falling test scores, illiteracy, the fall of the United States from world dominance, communism, a decline in values and morals, skin cancer (After all, Patrick did get a tan!) nudity, promiscuity, perversion, and worst of all flatulence! I believe these attacks really stem from discomfort with the notion of child centered practices and what they imply.

As I noted earlier, I'm not sure I believe that history really repeats itself. However, I think there are some aspects of the progressive and open education periods that we can self consciously avoid. Those of you who responded to my dramatic "**Is Whole Language In Trouble?** blurb in the program get your answer (kind of) now. I see us repeating some of the same errors made by our predecessors. These circumstances continue to contribute to a misunderstanding of what we are really about. If we wish our legacy to be more than Big Books and Basalized Literature series we'll need to cope with these concerns. I believe we can see ourselves in the five "echoes" of Progressive and Open Education which follow.

1) **Neither the early progressives nor the proponents of open education were sufficiently aware of earlier reform efforts to have learned from them** (Perrone, 1989). How familiar are the majority of Whole Language teachers with this history? I know much of this is new to me and I assume to many of you as well.

Let me provide another example, some of my closest colleagues maintain that whole language is different because we now have a theoretical basis for what we do and our predecessors didn't . But the progressives and open educators were basing

what they were doing on the best theoretical information available to them too. I sense we are being a trifle smug and are engaging in revisionist history to claim learning theory as solely the domain of Whole Language. Might our descendants say that **we** had only a rudimentary theory of learning?

Others maintain that whole language is different because it is a grassroots movement which comes up from teachers. Much progressive and Open Ed reform started this way as well.

2) **Progressive education became solely the domain of professional educators** (Cremin, 1961). Thus an educational movement that had started as a part of the larger progressive social movement, with teachers discovering ways to work with children became simply a matter of educational practice and as such lost much of its public support. Much the same thing happened to Open Education as well. We have done little as yet to involve parents and politicians as we seek to implement Whole Language in schools. Whole Language seems to be a movement solely comprised of professional educators. Are there any people in this audience who are not educators? Who are just parents or other interested lay people?

Although the WLU is not "controlled primarily by college professors from the mid-west" as the Progressive Education Association was described as being in it's later years, it does worry me that Dorothy Watson, Orin Cochrane, and Jerry Harste all live and work in the midwest. Fortunately, control of Whole Language by college professors isn't a problem, but our lack of parents at this meeting is. Last year I facetiously suggested that no one be admitted to this year's convention unless accompanied by a parent who is not a teacher. Does that make it rated PG/NT? The suggestion was a joke but our lack of connection with parents is a serious issue which keeps us from gaining as much support as we might and from helping the public to understand what we are really about.

3) **The literature of both the progressives and the open educators often focused only on technique, thereby diluting and losing the larger agenda** (Perrone, 1989). This is happening to a large degree as textbooks and workshops popularizing Whole Language proliferate.

Big Books and Basalized Literature programs can be seen as cases in point. They don't really support a child centered agenda in and of themselves. Sure, kids might like them a bit better than the normal stuff, but they do take longer and are not as efficient at teaching skills. So here, a child centered agenda can be lost, and critics who may be operating from a skills perspective can say "see it really doesn't work very well."

4) **The movements became "bandwagons" and everybody jumped on. Specific approaches to teaching were forced upon teachers by over-zealous administrators** (Perrone, 1989). Many times such teachers were ill-prepared for such a change and did not support it. These people were left to simply adopt techniques with the kind of results I noted previously. Some of the failures in open schools resulted from people over generalizing about student choice and self direction. In these cases children were left with no direction and again critics could claim, "see it doesn't work, kids don't learn anything."

Margaret Naumberg wrote the following about the 1928 convention of the Progressive Education Association " Anything less than progressive education is now quite out of date in America. No one wishes any longer to be called conservative. Every shade therefore of radical, progressive and mildly conservative educator from public as well as private schools was to be found at the Eighth Conference on Progressive Education" (quoted in Cremin, 1961, p. 249)

Are we not experiencing this as everyone claims to be whole language? Clearly, the same thing is already happening in some "Whole Language" schools and school districts. In Minnesota, where I live the Department of Education Reading and

Language Arts coordinator goes around the state claiming that a) Companion Reading (also known as Metra) is whole language because it entails all aspects of language, speaking, listening, reading, and writing: and /or b) (depending on who tells you the story) that this phonics driven, nonsense based reading program is very compatible with whole language because you can do bookmaking and literature reading along with it. Do you all know what Companion Reading is? ....

5) **Both the Progressive Education and Open Education movements took on a political tone that the larger community did not support.** Such politicization is under way with Whole Language as some of its advocates describe it as transformative, revolutionary or subversive (Edelsky, Altwerger and Flores, 1990). Actually I think these folks are correct about the potentials for Whole Language. However, I don't think it's particularly wise to be shouting this too loud. This can serve to alienate some of our members and certainly can make us an easy political target.

Being truly child-centered is radical enough. I think we would do well to focus on explaining to parents, educators and the general public what that means.

The second section of this presentation deals with how we as teachers and as a movement can avoid these pitfalls in getting our message heard and our schools changed. Thus I suggest the following steps which individual teachers can take.

The movement and its teachers need to become self consciously political. This needs to happen in our interactions with parents and the larger community, with politicians, with those who would attack Whole Language on political grounds, and among ourselves. There are a number of ways we can do this.

A) Parents: Many times the parents of our students do not recognize us a Whole Language teachers. Instead we are seen as excellent or innovative teachers. Although such recognition is flattering it doesn't give parents any leverage in promoting change. Everyone desires excellent teachers and believes in innovation.

Instead, we need to identify ourselves not just as excellent teachers but as Whole Language teachers.

Explain to parents what Whole Language is, how it's different from traditional models, and invite them to visit your classroom. Invite parents and the local media to your classroom for special events such as an "Authors Tea" or a celebration of literature. Creating a classroom newsletter which contains children's work, descriptions from the teacher about what is happening in the classroom, and explanations of the reasons behind these activities would be very helpful. Make sure to clearly explicate that Whole Language is more than just fun skills learning. It would be a very rich learning experience for children to create the newsletter on a regular basis. General information about Whole Language would also be very helpful to parents.

B) Politicians: We can't be naive and assume that our beliefs will catch on just because we believe them. Once parents know the difference between Whole Language and other approaches encourage them to write or call their representatives in the legislature. The decision making, literacy, collaborative and people skills children learn in Whole Language classrooms are vital to all but the most authoritarian notions of citizenship. Describe how Whole Language and a child centered curriculum builds these citizenship "skills" to both parents and politicians. We can't go too far wrong by emulating George Bush in this aspect and "wrapping ourselves in the flag"

We also need to be cognizant of the kinds of things happening in our state legislatures. For example the **Outcome Based Education** movement in Minnesota and other states is antithetical to Whole Language, despite administrative protestations to the contrary, because it is based on the belief that we can identify specific outcomes in advance, teach them directly and then test them. In fact, the legislation states in Minnesota states that, "what is to be learned should be clearly identified." Such a model implies that meaning and knowledge are fixed and come

from outside the learner. In this model it is the job of the schools to transmit information to students.

In Whole Language classrooms we work with a negotiated curriculum, whereby the students and teachers together create the curriculum based on students' needs and interests, the teachers' interests, the teachers' prescriptions for students, and curricular mandates from the school, district, or state. Assessment changes from being based on test performance to a long range assessment of the students work and growth based the work students are doing. Progressives, Open Educators, and Whole Language advocates alike believe students learn by engaging with content in many different ways. Because not everyone will share the same activities or experiences, knowledge and meaning are personal, personally created, and changeable. We can set long term goals, and organize our classrooms and instruction to foster them. Similarly, we can (if necessary) identify sub-skills after they have been learned in context. But the notion of identifying specific pieces in advance and then creating activities which teach them is contrary to the theory and philosophy of Whole Language. Those who say OBE and Whole Language are really very similar have usually missed the point about Child-Centered education all together and usually see Whole Language as a more palatable and perhaps more defensible approach to skills teaching.

We can effect the movement toward Outcome Based Education (or any other initiatives coming out of our legislatures) with the help of parents. To do this parents need to know how it affects them, how it will stifle Whole Language and how the two are different. We, in turn, need to pay attention to what is happening at the state levels. Being resigned to having directives come from above allows those who wish to provide these directives to continue to do so.

In addition, it will be helpful to all of us if we work to identify and elect candidates who will support the kind of education we wish to promote. Speak to,

question, and educate local and national candidates about Whole Language and child centered schooling.

C) Attacks on Whole Language: In some places Whole Language has come under attack from the fundamentalist right. Patrick Shannon's address at the WLU Convention last year did an excellent job of describing Whole Language as supporting the Bill of Rights. You may wish to make this point to parents as well. The tape, entitled "Why Become Political?" (#WL-B39) is available from Network Communications, here at the convention. Again the "citizenship" skills described earlier may be of help in these instances as well. Others at this convention have dealt more thoroughly with this particular issue so I won't say much more about it.

D) Among Ourselves: Finally, in the political arena, we must avoid inflammatory rhetoric at all costs. Describing Whole Language as "revolutionary" or "subversive" can only serve to alert those who see us as a threat. Such rhetoric also has the potential to alienate many teachers, parents and others who would support us as an educational movement.

As I noted earlier, in general, I agree with these folks. However, I think the rhetoric is problematic. I suggest focusing on what you are doing, how it is affecting kids and what our goals (or outcomes if we want to co-opt their language) are. Why wave a red flag at a bull? I believe many more parents and teachers would support us if they had a clear idea what we are about, free from rhetoric and hyperbole.

Also, if we are a grassroots movement, we need to do our own dissemination. If you can, take practicum students or student teachers in your classrooms. Don' t worry if you are "not doing Whole Language right." None of us have arrived... its more important that we continue and help others along the journey. Further, it's my experience that the people promoting Madeline Hunter's "Elements of Instruction" achieved part of their agenda because teachers and administrators were saying, "new teachers need to know about the Elements of Instruction." We need to be saying, "new

teachers need to know about process writing, about literature circles, about journaling, about creation of meaning, and about managing a child centered classroom." Say that to your principal, and to the college professors and student teachers you work with, and to the people responsible for inservice in your district.

Don't adopt a new technique or activity until you are certain it is consistent with your beliefs. We certainly can't control the creations of publishers as they try to take advantage of the Whole Language movement. What we can do is be cognizant of the underlying philosophies of what we are doing. There are many materials and approaches being sold under the guise of Whole Language which actually stem from the opposite belief system. Sometimes these materials appear on the surface to be compatible with Whole Language but on further examination prove to stem from a knowledge transmission perspective

Cooperative Learning is a case in point, as many of the strategies being promoted in the literature take a formulaic, behavioristic approach to helping kids work in groups. Often what is called "positive interdependence" is really based on grades, and children are expected to generate specifically defined answers and products. A handout from a nationally known cooperative learning trainer includes the following listed under the heading "Some Simple Cooperative Structures'; worksheet checkmates, homework checkers, reading groups where students answer teacher or book generated questions together; a checker looks for the right answer, book report pairs, where one child reports on the other child's book, drill partners, and a section entitled "Cooperative Learning in Composition."

This section as much as any indicates just how far from whole language the goals of cooperative learning can be. The directions instruct the teacher to assign compositions and partners, the partners then outline each other's compositions, do their own research, and write the first paragraphs of their compositions together. After the compositions are completed the partners read each other's compositions for

capitalization, punctuation, spelling, language usage and other items as specified by the teacher. The partners make suggestions for revision as well. Each student now uses all suggestions for revision, the partners reread each other's compositions and sign off to guarantee that no errors exist. The students grades include a quality score and a score indicating the total number of errors on both compositions (paraphrased from "Some Simple Cooperative Structures," original source unknown). This is seen as positive interdependence! This looks more to me like what Garth Boomer (1989/92) calls "a softer technology of surveillance and control " (p. 13)

I am certainly not opposed to children working together. In fact it is a basic tenet of Whole Language that learning is a social process. Many of the Cooperative Learning strategies are helpful in getting children to work together. However, as we've seen many of these approaches are predicated on grades and/or rewards, or based in defined outcomes, roles or products external to the children, and thus are contrary to the theory, philosophy and spirit of Whole Language

Further, I ask those of you who provide inservice or workshops in Whole Language to make sure the philosophies and theories underlying your work are clearly evident and understood. At the same time we can't become vigilantes, deciding which practices are acceptable and which are not. Technique without philosophy dilutes our larger agenda. We need to be careful to make sure this doesn't happen.

We need to protect those having Whole Language practices forced on them with the same fervor with which we support Whole Language. Administrators who see the benefits of Whole Language but don't understand the philosophy often try to mandate it in their schools. School districts that have adopted Whole Language programs without involving teachers are often detrimental to the goal of promoting Whole Language in schools. A principal in our district announced to her teachers last fall "I'm going to collect your lesson plans every week and we'll all be Whole Language by November." Fortunately, some of the teachers in that school have

taken this as an opportunity and are actively pursuing learning about it. But I'm sure others will do it half heartedly and without really understanding it, and of course their work will be held up to us as examples of Whole Language "not working."

We need to not become so zealous in our promotion of Whole Language that other voices are stifled. Let your administrators know that it is not appropriate to mandate Whole Language. Historically, such efforts have led only to failure and/or the rapid discrediting of the mandated approaches. It is likely that mandated Whole Language will suffer the same fate.

We need to become more aware of the child centered movements which preceded us, and more aware of what is happening currently in schools. Many stories of Whole Language based school reform come from individuals' experiences. Although Sarason (1990) warns us that examples from specific settings are typically not directly applicable to another, an understanding of previous movements and of what others are currently doing can help us deal with predictable and recurrent problems.

Such information can come from a number of sources. If you have the time, energy and interest, an in-depth documentation of your transition from a traditional classroom to a Whole Language classroom can be a powerful tool. Full blown documentation replete with examples of children's work, notes to parents, schedules, areas of focus, descriptions of day-to-day life in your classroom, your failures and frustrations and the approaches you took to overcome them, and your success and joys in implementing Whole Language could provide others with insights and ideas for their own transitions. This type of data did not become available about progressive schools until long after progressive education was past its peak. We need this information, warts and all, now! It also serves as part of the ongoing assessment of your classroom.

Finally, I urge you to acquaint yourself with some of the literature from both the progressive movement and the open education movement. Most of the teachers I work with have fairly scant knowledge about either movement. There are a number of wonderful books on both topics available and I do have a list available for you..

In conclusion, there is quite a bit of good news. We are all a part of a century long effort toward child-centered schools. Although change is slow the "progressive tradition" in American schools was wrought vast changes in the way schools operate since the time of Joseph Mayer Rice. We are the standard bearers for this ideal and our work will change how schools operate in the future. If all Whole Language teachers were to implement some of these suggestions we may be able help child centered schools become the mainstream of American public education, and child centered, literacy based education to become the legacy of the Whole Language movement. We are correcting some of the failures of the progressive movement. In 1938 in Progressive Education at the Crossroads (1938) Boyd Bode wrote:

> *The issue of democracy is becoming more insistent in all the relations of life. It implies a social and educational philosophy which needs to be formulated and applied. If progressive education can succeed in translating its spirit into terms of democratic philosophy and procedure the future of education in this country will be in its hand. On the other hand, if it persists in a one sided absorption in the individual pupil, it will be circumnavigated and left behind* (pp. 43-44).

I believe our growing understanding of learning as a social process, our focus on being child-centered, and our move toward a negotiated curriculum, where children have genuine voice constitutes exactly this translation of spirit into philosophy and procedure.

Lawrence Cremin ended his history of the progressive movement by saying:

> *The Progressive Education Association had died and progressive education itself needed drastic re-appraisal. Yet the transformation they had wrought in the school was in many ways as irreversible as the larger industrial transformation of which it had been a part. And for all the talk about pedagogical*

breakthroughs and crash programs, the authentic progressive vision remained strangely pertinent to the problems of mid century America. Perhaps it only awaited the reformulation and resuscitation that would ultimately derive from a larger resurgence of reform in American life and thought (p. 353).

I believe that the progressive vision is also as pertinent to the coming turn of the millennium as it was to the beginning and middle the 20th century. Whole Language educators have reformulated and resuscitated this vision. This can be a time of renewal and reform if we chose to make it so. Whole Language educators can achieve where both the progressives and the open educators failed. We can leave as our legacy genuine child-centered schools as the mainstream of American Public education.

Selected Bibliography

Bode, B. (1971). Progressive education at the crossroads. New York: Arno Press. (Originally published in 1938)

Boomer, G. (1989). "Literacy: The epic challenge beyond progressivism." English in Australia. No. 89, pp. 4-17. (Revised and re-edited with an additional postscript for distribution at the Whole Language Umbrella Conference August, 1992)

Cremin., L. A. (1961). The transformation of the school. New York: Random House Inc.

Dennis, P. (1951). Auntie Mame. New York: Vanguard Press.

Edelsky, C., Altwerger, B., & Flores, B. (1990). Whole language: What's the difference? Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books Inc.

Myers, D.A. & Myers, L. (eds.) (1973). Open education re-examined. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books

Perrone, V. (1989). Working papers: Reflections on teachers, schools and communities. New York: Teachers College Press.

Rice, J. M. (1969) The public school system of the United States. New York: Arno Press. (Originally published in 1893)

Rugg, H. & Schumacher, A. (1928) The child-centered school. Yonkers on Hudson, New York: World Book Company

Sarason, S. B. (1990). The predicable failure of educational reform. San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publishers.

Shannon, P. (1990). The struggle to continue: Progressive reading instruction in the United States. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books Inc.

Silberman, C.E. (ed.), (1972). The open classroom reader. New York: Vintage Books

"Some simple cooperative structures" photocopy, original source unknown.

Spodek, B. & Walberg, H. (1975) Studies in open education. New York: Agathon Press